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UNCLAS HALIFAX 000036

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ALIEN AND DRUG SMUGGLING ALONG THE MAINE BORDER

REF: 04 VANCOUVER 1207

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Smuggling of Asians and drugs across the U.S.-Maine border is ongoing, according to the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Intelligence Unit in Houlton, Maine. While lacking hard numbers, CBP believes it is also a growing phenomena. Smuggling of Koreans is relatively easy, they said, as Koreans can enter Canada without a visa. Combined U.S.-Canadian law enforcement efforts along the border have had some recent successes in confronting this problem. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On February 4, press reported the sentencing of four Koreans who were arrested after being smuggled across the Maine border near Houlton on January 31. Reportedly the four were spotted by border agents using infrared monitors during nighttime patrol flights. They received US\$ 500 fines, 5 days in jail, and will be deported to Korea.

¶3. (SBU) The CBP Intelligence Unit in Houlton, Maine told us the two smugglers involved in the operation were caught in Canada and are being detained by Canadian Immigration. One of the smugglers is a naturalized Canadian citizen, who has been previously convicted for alien smuggling and the second is a Korean permanent resident of Canada, who will be deported to Korea. This is part of an operation based out of Ontario. The case reports show that the aliens fly into Pearson Airport in Ontario and are then smuggled through Detroit or Buffalo. Since 2000, the smugglers have been using the Maine border as well for smuggling not only people, but drugs. CBP added they had recently arrested a Vietnamese in the U.S. who was sending US \$137,000 worth of drugs and currency to Canada. Houlton CBP is also working with the RCMP IBET team on another smuggling instance in which 18 Asians crossed the Saint John River into Maine sometime in January.

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